Australian Garden HISTORY

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A NSW garden history cornucopia

Tom Roberts' grass trees

Christina's garden

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Snippets

200th anniversary of Joseph Hooker's birth

Portrait of Sir Joseph Hooker, Director, Kew Gardens, by TH Maguire, 1851.

Allport Library and Museum, Hobart

Margaret Hope watercolour of blue-flowered *Scaevola hookeri* with *Caladenia pulcherrima*. Many plant names, including that of the scaevola, commemorate the botanists William and Joseph Hooker.

Watercolour in Hope album, published in 2015 by the Allport Library and Museum, Hobart, as *Character of the blossom: wildflowers of Tasmania by Margaret Hope 1848–1934*.

The 200th anniversary of the birth of botanist Joseph Dalton Hooker occurred on 27 June 1817, a bicentenary marked with offerings as different as a virtual Himalayan trek and a weekend of celebrations at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Hooker's connection with Kew was profound. He succeeded his father William Hooker as director of the gardens in 1865. Both father and son were distinguished botanists. Joseph Hooker's appointment as director was a rare example, as Wikipedia notes, of 'an outstanding man succeeded in his post by an equally outstanding son'.

Both were also keen travellers. Joseph Hooker sailed with James Clark Ross's 1839–1843 expedition as assistant surgeon and naturalist on the *Erebus*. As well as exploring Antarctica, Ross's expedition visited New Zealand, touched briefly at Sydney's Port Jackson, and had two extended stays in Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land).

With geologist Charles Lyell, Joseph Hooker supported the papers of Alfred Russel Wallace and Charles Darwin on the mutability of species when these were jointly presented to the Linnean Society of London in 1858.

An understanding of the botanical world is fundamental to human survival. Many might think of Hooker's time as representing the great age of exploration and discovery of new plant species, and see the pursuit as something largely belonging to the past. Nevertheless, some 2000 new plant species are still identified every year. Alistair Watt's article 'Modern-day plant hunting' in the April 2017 issue of *Australian Garden History* testifies that the excitement and productivity of exploring for plants continues – or has done until very recent days.

Sources

Winifred M Curtis (1972) 'Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817–1911)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol 4, Melbourne University Press.

KJ Willis, ed (2017) *State of the world's plants* 2017. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (available free online).

Cover (detail) View from the old cottage of the garden at Horse Island. Howard Tanner's feature review of *Horse Island* by Christina Kennedy starts on p 9.

photo Jason Busch

Editorial

Bernadette Hince

Our winter issue of *Australian Garden History* begins with two blockbuster feature reviews. Heritage consultant Chris Betteridge leads off with his review of *Gardens of history and imagination: growing New South Wales*. This notable collection of essays, edited by Gretchen Poiner and Sybil Jack (who have contributed essays themselves), is co-published by Sydney University Press and the NSW Chapter of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia, with generous support from the Australian Garden History Society (Kindred Spirits Fund) and other supporters.

Sydney architect Howard Tanner, a founder of the Society with a longstanding interest in Australian landscape design and history, reviews *Horse Island*, Christina Kennedy's story of her sensational garden on the south coast of New South Wales. The book is beautifully illustrated with Jason Busch's photography.

Various delights follow, including the poem 'In Mr Glover's summer garden', by Jeff Brownrigg, in which Betty Churcher walks with John Glover through a painting of his home and garden at Mills Plain, Van Diemen's Land.

Maria Hitchcock describes an AGHS excursion to find another painter, Tom Roberts – or more precisely, to find the grass trees near Inverell in northern NSW which featured in Roberts' painting 'Bailed up'. Tim Gatehouse visits a garden in Ireland with probable Australian links, and the man behind Hamilton Gardens, Peter Sergel, gives us the story of these NZ gardens. John Leslie Dowe, a specialist in Arecaceae (palms), commemorates an ornamental fountain in the Brisbane Botanic Gardens, and scientist Anne Cochrane explains seed banks.

The Australian Garden History Society would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work and commitment of landscape architect and horticulturalist Phoebe LaGerche-Wijsman, who has now moved on after five years as our national executive officer. Her qualifications in architecture and landscape architecture combined with social media, electronic communication and management skills were invaluable. (A profile of Phoebe was featured in *Australian Garden History* in October 2012.) We wish Phoebe all success.

The Society welcomes the appointment of the new national executive officer, Robyn Robins. Her experience in marketing, management and the tertiary education sector, and with the Friends of the Botanic Gardens, and her enthusiasm for horticulture, garden history and knowledge of New Zealand (where her father was a noted amateur rose breeder), dovetail well with the Society. Robyn was appointed in April 2017, joining Georgina Ponce de Leon in the Melbourne office to make a talented small team. We are delighted to welcome Robyn! She will be our featured 'Profile' in the October 2017 issue of *Australian Garden History*.

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photo Kim Woods Rabbidge, 2017

Chris Betteridge

A cornucopia of New South Wales garden history

Carriageway, Retford Park house. Evolving from the gardenesque, elements of the boom style are evident in the garden.

Mitchell Library, Hordern family photographic albums c1865–1925

Last year marked the bicentenary of Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens and the 300th anniversary of the birth of Capability Brown. It was fitting that these momentous events were celebrated with some wonderful publications and exhibitions about the philosophy and history of gardens and gardening. Of the books, one of the best is *Gardens of history and imagination: growing New South Wales*.

Gardens of history and imagination collects ten essays by some of this country's foremost experts in historical research, landscape architecture, plant ecology, garden history, anthropology, sociology, photography and horticulture. Edited by Gretchen Poiner and Sybil Jack, the book is co-published by Sydney University Press and the NSW Chapter of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia, with generous support from the Australian Garden History Society (Kindred Spirits Fund), the City of Sydney, the Nursery and Garden Industry Australia, the Royal Botanic Gardens and the State Library of NSW. Beautifully designed and finely illustrated with more than 50 historical images sourced from the State Library, Royal Botanic Gardens and private collections, the essays are supported by a bibliography that runs to 21 pages and a comprehensive index.

With forewords by Brett Summerell, Richard Neville and Robert Prince and an introduction by Gretchen Poiner, the essays cover a particularly wide range of topics on the human management and manipulation of the Australian landscape, from the first Australians' understanding of and care for country through the evolution of gardening by non-Aboriginal settlers to the role of gardens in health and science.

Anthropologist Gaynor Macdonald's essay 'Gardens, landscapes, wilderness: ways of seeing ourselves' looks at ways in which humans control and humanise space. She contrasts the order out of chaos created in the highly-stylised gardens of Japan with 'Aboriginal Australia: the most humanised landscape in the world'. She concludes that all gardens:

> In different ways, emphasise the good life: health, harmony and safety. How they do so varies from one part of the world to another, and through time, but because they do so they are a window onto how we understand ourselves.

Gretchen Poiner, an anthropologist with a strong interest in human connections to landscape, has contributed 'A sense of place' which explores the ways in which the creating and maintaining of gardens help humans to develop a sense of place, for gardens 'are and were as much about people as they are about plants'. Her essay contrasts the evolution of the gardens of the early European settlers in NSW, from necessity to pleasure with the Chinese market gardens in Sydney suburbs tended by those who toiled in the hope that they would return to their ancestral homes. The sometimes dynastic family burial plots on

isolated rural properties are seen as affirming 'unambiguously and into a foreseeable future an enduring connection' with place.

Sybil Jack, an authority on botanical history and forest ecology, contributes 'Garden elements: seeds, plants and their sources in colonial New South Wales'. She begins with:

> I first saw how plants could be spread when helping my grandmother in her back garden. She had a passion for ferns and, wherever we went, if she saw a fern she didn't have she would acquire a shoot – and with her green fingers it always grew. After she left that garden I wondered how they fared. When I came to Australia I noticed how people visiting gardens, opened occasionally to the public, surreptitiously nipped a cutting while looking the other way. It spurred my interest in how the once separate distribution of botanical species in the different continents came to be amalgamated.

Her essay covers early European plant arrivals in Australia, the transport of native species back to Britain and the continent, sources of information on plants available to the early colonists including nursery catalogues, and the role of nurserymen in expanding the varieties of plants available to gardeners — including improvement of stock through hybridisation and the development of the nursery industry and of special interest groups devoted to particular forms such as camellias or orchids.

Janet George, specialist in pharmacy and sociology, deals with 'Cultivated wellbeing: gardens and health in colonial New South Wales'. She states:

> It is a truism that the colony of New South Wales was established at a significant time for botany and medicine, with Enlightenment ideas of rationalism, classification and the search for causation underpinning the excitement of the 'new'. By the time of settlement, plants from all over the known world were included in European medicinal gardens and formularies [pharmacopoeias].

The early European settlers relied on traditional health remedies used since antiquity and brought with them a 'complex, hierarchic and contested structure of medical practitioners' inherited from Great Britain. Increasing knowledge of health and the causes of illnesses during the 19th century was counterbalanced by quackery and self-help approaches. The range of medicinal plants available was endless but little use was initially made of locally grown plants, with drugs imported from Britain. Janet deals with the use of plants to enhance the amenity of hospitals and mental institutions and with research into Australian plant species for their medicinal qualities, including Joseph Maiden's work on essential oils at Sydney's Technological, Industrial and Sanitary Museum (now The Powerhouse). She concludes that European settlers achieved wellbeing and holistic health when and where possible by 'bringing together garden elements both utilitarian and decorative, traditional and exotic, negotiating the security of the known with the attraction of the new and different.'

Historian Ailsa McPherson's essay 'Exhibiting gardening' adopts the *Oxford Dictionary* definition that a garden is 'a piece of ground devoted to growing flowers, fruit or vegetables' but which can also be 'ornamental grounds for public resort', while horticulture is the art of cultivating same. Within this frame, she explores the horticultural societies and their exhibitions in Sydney from the 1830s to the 1870s.

Left: Gretchen Poiner and Sybil Jack (eds) *Gardens of history and imagination: growing New South Wales*, Sydney University Press in assoc with NSW Chapter of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia, RRP $60, xxvi + 277 pp.

Right: Conrad Martens, 'Rosebank, Woolloomooloo, the Residence of James Laidley', 1840.

Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

Completed streetscape at Daceyville Garden Suburb, Sydney, c1911. No longer will 'free Australians … be herded together in terraces of mere dog-boxes' (John Rowland Dacey, Labor MLA, 1911).

Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

Social divisions in the colony between the gentlemen settlers and the emancipated convicts stifled the early development of societies devoted to agricultural, pastoral and horticultural interests, especially when Governor Macquarie refused his patronage unless emancipists were permitted to join, a concession the landed gentry were unwilling to make. As the colony matured, societies formed, starting with the Agricultural Society of NSW, formed in 1822, which expanded to include horticulture, but was suspended in 1836 due to drought and depression. This was followed by the Australian Floral and Horticultural Society which began exhibitions in 1838. The evolution of this society into the Australasian Botanic and Horticultural Society coincided with improvements at Sydney's Botanic Gardens under Charles Moore. As with many societies, differences of opinion over policy and direction eventually led to discontent and in 1862 14 members created a new 'unpretentious' group, reflecting 'co-operation between gardeners and horticulturists', the Horticultural Society of NSW. Royal visits, intercolonial exhibitions and the 1879 International Exhibition are all covered.

Identified in the book as a horticulturist, bureaucrat, educator and cultural landscapes tour leader, Stuart Read is another contributor well known to AGHS members. His essay 'Riverine gardens of Sydney waterways' draws on Stuart's considerable knowledge of the historic cultural landscapes of NSW. It deals with the early productive gardens and vineyards along the Parramatta River, including the Government Farm in the Domain at Parramatta and the Macarthurs' Elizabeth Farm, prominently sited harbourside gardens such as Elizabeth Bay House, Henrietta Villa and Carrara, established as aesthetic statements of social position, and the gardens used by the public for recreation, education and research, including Nielsen Park at Vaucluse, Cremorne Gardens and Correys Gardens and the adjoining Cabarita Park. Stuart's essay concludes with an investigation of gardens associated with health care or private education such as Callan Park and St Ignatius' College, Riverview. Many of these gardens are much reduced in size and subject to ongoing threats, most surviving 'thanks to public protest and lobbying'. The author questions their future unless more is known about their past, their design, their function and their meanings.

Academic historian John Ramsland examines the development of the designed urban environment in his essay 'Garden suburbs for the people: the movement from late nineteenth-century New South Wales'. He traces the movement, originating

> from Ebenezer Howard's English doctrinal and analytical tome of 1898, *Tomorrow: A peaceful path to real reform,* in which he advanced the idea of garden cities / suburbs as a vehicle of social revolution – of a peaceable nature – towards a better and brighter future for civilisation.

Sydney's remarkable growth from the 1880s led to overcrowding and insanitary conditions in the old-established inner suburbs such as The Rocks, Darlinghurst, Woolloomooloo, Pyrmont and Surry Hills, exacerbated by often poor quality construction of housing. The bubonic plague outbreak in 1901 led to reconstruction of dwellings in The Rocks and Millers Point but despite popular perceptions that the early 20th century was a time of 'social reform' and 'humanistic liberalism', Ramsland argues that 'political corruption and opportunism and lack of concern for working people' led to a lack of radical reform, with little or no consultation with working people.

The essay uses the example of the NSW government's Daceyville Garden Suburb and examines the politics that brought it about, its evolution, what it was like to live there, the development of gardens in the suburb and the fact that the initial vision was never fully realised. Daceyville is compared with nearby Matraville Soldiers' Garden Village for returned World War I veterans and with the Griffins' 'utopia-esque' landscaped 'masterwork' at Castlecrag and the Australian Agricultural Company's Hamilton Estate near Newcastle. The author argues that the last-mentioned has perhaps survived best.

Colleen Morris, a landscape heritage consultant and stalwart of the Australian Garden History

Hill End was a thriving settlement in the gold rush years, with domestic gardens such as this growing a wide variety of vegetables, herbaceous plants and shrubs.

American and Australasian Photographic Company, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

Society, has published widely on the garden history of Sydney and NSW. Her essay 'Planting New South Wales: the role of the Sydney Botanic Garden' chronicles the significant and enduring influence of Charles Moore and his staff and their successors at the Gardens in the landscapes and plantings of the Gardens and the Domain, the grounds of official residences in Sydney and Moss Vale, but also Hyde, Victoria, Wentworth and Centennial Parks. This role was later expanded to all public institutions. Colleen follows Moore's half century of influence in tree planting which 'had become a sign of civic pride', his advocacy for 're-foresting the country' with timber trees grown for their hardiness in the various areas of the state and recommendation for the establishment of a government nursery.

JH Maiden, Moore's successor, was a prolific botanical explorer, researcher, educator and author who continued and expanded the distribution of plants from the Sydney Gardens and the Government Nursery to councils, churches, hospital and individuals. The essay concludes that 'the role of the Royal Botanic Gardens of Sydney in influencing the horticultural tastes of the community and the cultural landscapes of the state over 200 years is of exceptional significance'. It's hard to argue with that.

Artist, book designer, photographer and photographic historian Catherine Rogers not only brought her considerable talent to the design and layout of the book but also contributed an essay 'Hollywood in Burwood: the transformation of a suburban backyard to a garden'. The author brings her passion for photography to bear on the evolution of the Sydney suburb of Burwood and particularly on Thomas Rowley's 213 acre Cheltenham Estate first advertised for sale in 1854.

> One thousand handsome, coloured 'lithographic posters', illustrated with local scenes and the artist's ideas of the development's picturesque potential, were produced as part of the advertising devoted to making this huge land subdivision and sale a great event.

In a section titled 'Gardens to backyards', Catherine discusses the political responses to outbreaks of disease originating in small, poorly maintained backyards with pools of contaminated water, cesspits and piles of rotting garbage, leading to the borough of Burwood endeavouring to bring the municipality under the *City Improvement Act*, so that

> the evils which have been allowed to grow up in the city, and which are now found to be exceedingly difficult to remedy, will not be permitted to become established in other parts of the metropolis.

The last part of the essay is devoted to the property Hollywood, built in 1868–69, extended in 1978 and given its name in 1872 by then owner the Reverend George King after his first parish in Hollywood, Ireland. The house and those who lived there are described, including the ways in which the function and use of the backyard could change over time as improvements in water supply and sanitation occurred. The author concludes that

> while remaining essentially as private space behind the house, the suburban backyard could be re-imagined and redesigned not simply as a place for quiet, aesthetic rest but as the new (and contradictory) place for recreation – as a pleasure garden.

The collection is rounded out by 'The evolving meanings of Retford Park: from the Horderns to Fairfax, 1885 to the present' by Sue Rosen, historian and heritage consultant. Retford Park at Bowral in the Southern Highlands of NSW has been in the news lately due to the extremely generous bequest of the property by the late James Fairfax to the National Trust of Australia (NSW). Sue's essay chronicles the development of this highly significant estate under three generations of the prominent Hordern family between 1884 and 1964. The main house was designed by Albert Bond in 1887 and extended in 1907 to a design by Morrow and de Putron, who also designed the Hordern's Art Nouveau mansion Babworth at Darling Point.

The estate includes many other buildings – a 'former manager's residence, cottages, stables, a coach house and ancillary buildings, all sitting comfortably in the park-like landscape distinguished by avenue plantings, stands of mature trees, and the use of hedges to create garden rooms and compartments'. There are numerous aviaries, an emu run and a donkey enclosure and strong visual links to the surrounding farmland.

Acquired with an overgrown garden and neglected arboretum from King Ranch in 1964 by James Fairfax, initially as a weekend retreat, Retford Park became Fairfax's home in 1995. He commissioned Melbourne architect Guilford Bell to design the swimming pool and pavilion, and engaged English landscape architect John Codrington to 'redo' the grounds.

Sue provides considerable detail on the evolution of the estate and the plantings which include significant specimens and examples of work by prominent garden designers.

If you are a professional landscape practitioner, a garden historian, a heritage specialist, a keen gardener or anyone interested in the history of our cultural landscape, you will find plenty of interest in this wonderful and very worthwhile addition to the body of Australian garden history literature. Whether you sit down and read it from cover to cover or dip into at leisure you will be richly rewarded. Those who delve into the bibliography will want to rush to the State Library or the Daniel Solander Library at the Botanic Gardens and may be there for some time! The authors, publishers and supporters are to be heartily congratulated and AGHS members who have not already acquired this book should do so at once.

Illustration showing the range of produce and prizes at the 1869 Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition, Sydney. 1 Colonial soap trophy, 2 Colonial sugar trophy, 3, Rustic (Law Somner) shed, with seed and floral exhibits, 4 Portable gas-works, 5 Western Kerosene Co (blocks of shale).
Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

Heritage consultant **Chris Betteridge** is qualified in botany, museum studies and heritage conservation, and has more than 30 years experience in the investigation, assessment, management and interpretation of the natural and cultural environment. He has lectured and published widely on the conservation of cultural landscapes including historic gardens, parks and cemeteries.

View from old cottage.
photo Jason Busch

Howard Tanner

Christina's garden

The far South Coast of New South Wales retains much of the simplicity of earlier times. Here rugged mountains and forests of tall-trunked trees come down close to the coast, with the sea edged by beautiful lakes and long sandy beaches.

A connection with history

For centuries the region was occupied by the Brinja Yuin people, with the Terosse clan located around Tuross Lakes. In the early days of European settlement, the better timber was felled, and good farming land cleared. Indeed the pattern of small isolated colonial settlements dating from the 1840s has largely survived to this day. Before modern roads, access to significant markets was by coastal shipping which had to weather the vicissitudes of shallow river ports and wharves on exposed headlands. The railway from Sydney reached the edge of Nowra in 1888, and overland travel to points further south involved a narrow road winding its way to Bega and Eden. Inland towns such as Cooma and Braidwood could be reached via rough tracks over the steep coastal escarpment.

Thomas Sutcliffe Mort (1816–78) is one of the great names of 19th century enterprise in Australia. He was an exceptional and talented individual – initially a merchant; then an auctioneer, notably in wool; evolving into a supplier of integrated financial services to pastoralists. Sydney's Mort's Dock and his refrigeration schemes (eventually the NSW Fresh Food & Ice company) were landmark ventures. He was a pioneer in many industries including mining, railways, wool, dairy, sugar, silk and cotton production.

In 1846 Mort purchased a property known as Percyville, on Darling Point. In love with the traditions of English Gothic architecture,

he pictured Darling Point as a Gothic village, and facilitated the construction of a fine parish church, St Mark's. He transformed his land with the construction of a handsome Gothic house, which he named Greenoaks, and the creation of a large and elaborate garden setting. Edmund Blacket was the architect of the house — which still sits on a bluff overlooking Double Bay and Sydney Harbour — and nurseryman Michael Guilfoyle implemented a 13-acre garden. Mort and Guilfoyle both took a keen interest in the promotion of horticulture, and plants and produce from the garden won numerous prizes.

By the 1860s Mort had acquired and consolidated 14,000 acres of land on the South Coast of New South Wales around the Tuross River and its fertile river flats. Centred on the village of Bodalla, this was to be a massive tenant-farmer community producing fine cheese. At Comerang he erected a large single-storeyed residence in a fine garden setting. Within the village he intended the construction of a grandly-towered stone church (1880, designed by Edmund Blacket and his sons) for the Anglican faith, and established a dairy factory; later, his son's wife was the beneficiary of a fine shingle-clad Catholic chapel (1886, designed by architect John Horbury Hunt).

On Thomas Mort's death his children inherited the Bodalla Estate. This continued as a major dairying enterprise for more than one hundred years, and over time quite a number of Mort's descendants formed heartfelt associations with the district, connecting with the rural enterprise and enjoying the natural beauty, the beaches, and the fishing. Decay and fire saw the demise of Comerang and another significant local Mort property named Brou.

In the late 1980s Thomas Mort's great great-granddaughter Christina Kennedy saw the opportunity to regain part of her heritage when her husband Trevor and she purchased Horse Island in Tuross Lakes near Bodalla, a beautiful and unusual setting for an envisaged house and garden.

Top: Western view from the big house.

Bottom: Rill from the northern end.

photos Jason Busch

Making a garden

Trevor and Christina Kennedy had acquired a gently hilly 200 acre island with four narrow peninsulas fingering out into the expansive waters of Tuross Lakes. To the northeast, across the lake, a distant line of Norfolk Island pines alludes to the beachfront at Tuross Head, and the ocean beyond. To the northwest the vista across a wide body of water is to dense eucalypt forest and the majestic misty mountains of the Deua National Park.

The island, reached by an old hardwood bridge, was one big unfenced paddock, planted with kikuyu grass for grazing, and infested with weeds. Stands of old southern mahogany (*Eucalyptus botryoides*), forest red gums (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) and ironbarks (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*) shaded the open spaces, with an occasional large kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*) on the ridge. Spotty or spotted gums (*Corymbia maculata*) filled the central valley, mingling with subtropical rainforest. Along the water's edge were mangroves and groves of she-oaks (*Casuarina glauca*).

First steps included weed control and the regeneration of the foreshore. While the whole island required thoughtful landscape conservation, the construction of a cottage and its garden setting was an important early initiative. This was a relatively modest venture, and only hinted at what was to come. The cottage, inspired by colonial traditions, has a Tuscan-columned veranda and a low hipped roof. As the builder's debris was cleared away, Christina faced the

challenge of making a garden setting for the house. By chance, her friend the botanical illustrator Robyn Mayo was visiting, and she suggested that using a palette of native plants would be truly complementary to the natural beauty of the place. At an early stage Christina recognised that a balance would need to be achieved, with more useful, controlled landscapes near the disciplined architecture of the buildings, yet easing into informal patterns of planting as one merged with the bush.

Christina threw herself into this new pursuit with great vigour: buying up relevant books, exploring the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan, joining the Australian Native Plants Society, and befriending grevillea expert Peter Olde. Given Trevor's childhood beside the sea in Albany, Western Australia – an area with a wealth of native plants – Christina decided that all Australian species were eligible for consideration in the creation of the garden.

As the cottage garden evolved, she saw the need to make a scrappy dam – which compromised the view – into an elegant water feature, and the chance for the grassy slopes between the tall trunked trees to become a compact set of golf links for Trevor. Like the writer Bill Gammage, she came to appreciate that at its best, the east coast Australian landscapes provided a kind of splendid understated parkland: with drifts of native grasses between clumped trees. As Christina gradually appreciated the 'capabilities' of the place, a much larger scheme of vistas, plantings and buildings came into view.

For the main house Trevor and Christina chose an elevated site on the island's northern tip. Initially inspired by Captain Piper's Henrietta Villa (c1817) on Sydney Harbour, its carefully resolved adaption of various colonial design sources reflects the input of Sydney designer Brian Barrow.

The immediate environs of the main house are formally planned, with the eastern garden's rill, circular pond, curving colonnade and lushly planted border recalling great English prototypes. Yet! It is P*andorea jasminoides* 'Variegata' crowning the colonnade, and the wonderful shrub border has *Melaleuca hypericifolia* 'Ulladulla Beacon' clipped in an undulating form interspersed with Gymea and Lord Howe Island lilies (*Doryanthes excelsa* and *Dietes robinsoniana*) plus massed kangaroo paw and grevilleas. Firewheel trees (*Stenocarpus sinuatus*) and red cedars (*Toona australis*) provide vertical accents. Across the lawn, a handsome composition of cycads and elkhorns provides a rich visual plinth to the house.

Top: Clipped peppermints in front of big house.

Bottom: Eastern garden at big house.

photos Jason Busch

The entrance drive culminates in a gravel turning-circle before the house. The distinctive black shafts and spikey topknots of grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) underplanted with kangaroo paw, and bordered by sweeping clipped banks of pink rock myrtle (*Thryptomene saxicola*) provide one of the garden's most striking impressions.

Elsewhere there is the Grevillea Garden – a species collection devised by Peter Olde – and places for potting and propagating, a vegetable garden, and guest accommodation with garden interludes for the visitor's enjoyment, all linked together by grassy tall-treed fairways.

In nearly every direction are framed views to the sparkling waters of the Tuross Lakes, often with mountains glimpsed beyond. Christina in a recent interview said: 'Anything I did was just an additional bonus; I don't claim any credit for the beauty of this place, as it was beautiful when we came here'. Nonetheless, the garden at Horse

Island is a truly impressive achievement. In the same interview Christina admitted: 'I have never thought of myself as particularly obsessive, but I think it takes an obsessive personality to do something like this'.

A book capturing the essence of the place

In 2015 the State Library of NSW embarked on a survey of contemporary gardens within the state, and your writer was entrusted with the task of locating gardens worthy of inclusion in an exhibition. The year 2016 marked the 200th birthday of Sydney's Botanic Gardens and 50 years since landscape design had become a profession. The quest was to discover gardens created since the 1980s which were truly innovative. We were not looking for Edna Walling look-alikes. While I had known Trevor and Christina Kennedy since the 1970s – when they had moved into a house with a garden planted by my mother – I was generally unaware of Christina's deep love of place, of history, and of gardening. As I began to make my garden enquiries, several people took me aside to tell me that the Kennedys had created something both substantial and significant near Bodalla. On an island, no less!

The visit to Horse Island was one of the highlights of the garden survey, as the place was at a pitch of perfection. Such moments in a garden are the result of huge effort under the surveillance of a fastidious eye. To capture the essence of the place the State Library commissioned photographer Jason Busch and filmmaker Michael Power to make a permanent record for their archives. Their images formed an important element of my exhibition 'Planting Dreams: Grand Garden Designs', at the State Library of NSW September 2016 – April 2017.

Christina – while recognising that both the buildings and the garden would further mellow and mature – could see that her work at Horse Island had reached fruition. Realising that all such creations are ephemeral, she decided to make a full and permanent record of Horse Island. This would enable her descendants and others to appreciate the special qualities of the place.

Hence the book, perhaps the finest monograph on an Australian garden yet produced. The generous landscape format is filled with specially commissioned photographs by Jason Busch, who reveals himself as one of Australia's great landscape photographers. The images are subtle and evocative and convey the moods of the landscape in different weather and different seasons. Christina's text is engaging and thoughtful, and her own photos give substance to the excellent catalogue of plants grown at Horse Island.

One of the nicest aspects of this book is the generous acknowledgement of all the people who helped create this splendid garden in a sublime landscape; of the commitment of the photographer; and of those who ensured a truly fine and well designed publication.

Howard Tanner AM is a Sydney architect with a longstanding interest in Australian landscape design and history. A founder of the AGHS, he curated the 2016–17 exhibition at the State Library of NSW 'Planting Dreams: Grand Garden Designs: a Photographic Exhibition of Contemporary Garden Design'.

Focal garden in driveway, Horse Island.

photo Jason Busch

Horse Island

Christina Kennedy, photography by Jason Busch (2016) Zabriskie Books, Watsons Bay.

RRP $88

Maria Hitchcock

The grass trees of Paradise Creek

A close look at Tom Robert's painting 'Bailed Up' (1895) shows some small shrubby plants in the foreground of the slope behind the stagecoach. These are *Xanthorrhoea glauca*. Plants growing near Inverell today are believed to be the ones Roberts painted – much larger of course, although the genus is renowned for being a very slow grower (1 cm a year).

I was lucky enough to be a participant in an AGHS tour of Inverell, NSW, on 22–23 April 2017, which was advertised as a weekend with Tom Roberts. As well as visiting the site of 'Bailed Up' on the old Armidale to Inverell Rd, we also clambered down to a rugged site along the Macintyre River near the location where 'In a Corner on the Macintyre' (1895) was painted. Roberts painted both works while staying at the Newstead property in an area now known as Paradise Creek.

Xanthorrhoea glauca (commonly known as 'grass tree' or 'blackboy') has a fairly widespread distribution extending from southern Queensland through NSW and into northern Victoria. It occurs in dry, well-drained and low nutrient conditions and is very adaptable to most gardens. Paradise Creek is a hotspot for this species, where they occur in great clusters, crowding the valleys and gullies. A large number would predate European colonisation. They are highly sculptural plants. Our AGHS group saw several with multiple crowns.

The Gamilaraay(or Kamilaroi) people of this area called the species *dhalan* and it had many

'Bailed Up', oil painting by Tom Roberts (1895, 1927).

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Top: *Xanthorrhoea glauca* believed to be one of the plants in 'Bailed Up'. The current road is slightly higher than that depicted in the painting. The original eucalypts in the painting are long gone.
photo Peter Lloyd, 2017

Middle: A group of Paradise Creek grass trees.
photo Kim Woods Rabbidge, 2017

Bottom: Members of AGHS Northern NSW branch in April 2017.
photo Kim Woods Rabbidge, 2017

uses. Nectar from the flowering spike was dipped into water in a coolamon to make a sweet drink full of vitamins. Plants which had fallen over were chopped up to get at the starchy heart and roots were roasted and eaten. It is believed that these taste like potato. The inside pale soft ends of young fronds were chewed. The long thick flowering spikes were sometimes used to make spears and short ends became fire drills. Xanthhorrhoeas are noted for their resin which was used to glue tool parts together, making the resin an important trade item. As well as being used as a glue it was a medicine. When heated and chewed it was a cure for dysentery or chest complaints. Early settlers used the resin in a variety of ways such as for varnishes and sealants.

Grass trees and fire

Judging by the dense skirts of dead fronds on several mature specimens it has been a while since a fire has gone through the Paradise Creek area. In a bushfire these dry skirts are highly flammable, engulfing the whole plant in flames. Smoke particles remain on the plant and are washed into the crown when it rains. This appears to promote flowering although some plants seem to flower without requiring a bushfire. Experiments with pouring smoked water into the crown to promote a flowering spike have been inconclusive. Plants usually recover quite well after fire, with the blackened trunks providing a wonderful contrast to the long fine bluish-green fronds.

Finding and growing grass trees

Grass trees are a sought-after garden plant. Because of their slow growth, it has become a common practice to dig up plants and sell mature specimens. In NSW plant sellers must be licensed and each plant must carry a National Parks and Wildlife Service tag. Some nurseries do sell seedlings but the plants will look like clumps of *Lomandra* for many years. Mature plants can be very expensive and are not readily available although several nurseries online do offer them for sale. If you are lucky enough to acquire one of these amazing native plants, there are a few tips to successful cultivation.

Firstly they look best on a mound which will also serve to provide good drainage. Dig a hole much wider than the plant and deeper. Partially fill with sand, then cut the pot away and carefully place the plant on the sandy base. Fill around with sand and water in well. Mulch well and water regularly for at least three months to ensure root development. Drench around the base of the plant with Seasol or equivalent from time to time to encourage root growth. If some of the leaves turn yellow it could be a sign of root rot. Water with some fungicide in a watering can over the foliage and around the trunk.

I'm sure Tom Roberts would be astounded to know that the small plant he painted so many years ago is still growing, strongly connecting past and present and – I hope – surviving well into the future.

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Walter Thomas, gardener at Murndal homestead, c1880.

State Library of Victoria, Winter Cooke family papers MS 10840

Tim Gatehouse

Larchill: a rediscovered Irish garden and its Australian cousin

In a country rich in horticultural treasures one of the most significant but least known gardens is to be found only 20 kilometres from Dublin, near the village of Kilcock in County Kildare. Established in the first half of the 18th century and embellished over succeeding decades, Larchill fell into neglect until its cultural significance was recognised by the present owners. Since 1994 they have restored it to the original concept of a ferme ornée within an arcadian landscape.

Historical background

A ferme ornée (literally, 'ornamental farm') described a country estate laid out according to aesthetic principles, but which was nevertheless a productive farm. An arcadian landscape extended the concept of the ferme ornée to embrace a pastoral paradise which emulated the Arcadia of classical literature and reflected human harmony with nature. Both concepts derived from the picturesque garden movement which developed in France and England as a reaction to the formal gardens of the 17th century.

In France, a wish for more relaxed living after the death of the autocratic Louis XIV expressed itself in a preference for naturalistic gardens, while in England this was prompted by the desire of wealthy travellers returning from the grand tour to recreate the classical landscapes of Italy, as depicted in the paintings of Claude, Poussin and Salvator Rosa, on their own estates. The desire for change was also influenced by descriptions of the naturalistic layouts of Chinese gardens, which were filtering back to Europe. One traveller who

Top left: The cockle shell tower in the walled garden.

Top right: The fox's earth mausoleum.

Bottom left: The Lake Temple, looking towards the Gothic lodge.

Bottom right: Fort Gibraltar in the lake.

photos Tim Gatehouse

was impressed by Italian scenery and its painted depictions was the architect William Kent, who utilised the pictorial approach in his designs for the renowned gardens of Stowe and Rousham.

However, picturesque gardens could also be created on a smaller scale as was shown by Phillip Southcote at Woburn Farm (not to be confused with Woburn Abbey) in the 1730s. The term 'ferme ornée' was first used in a description of this 60 hectare property. Careful planting concealed the boundaries, but left open views to distant landmarks. A circuit path through farmland led to temples, statues and other adornments. Amongst its many visitors were two presidents of the United States, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. Of similar size to Woburn Farm was The Leasowes, created by William Shenstone in the English midlands between 1743 and 1763. Shenstone was a poet whose published works evoked the landscape of classical Greece. After inheriting his father's farm, Shenstone transformed it in accordance with the visions conjured up by his own poetry. It has now been restored to its original state in recognition of its significance in the history of landscape design and its rarity. The poor survival rate of the ferme ornée is probably due to the difficulty of reconciling its ornamental and practical aspects, regarded as impossible by the landscape designer Humphrey Repton. The best known ferme ornée, l'Hameau, created for Marie Antoinette at Versailles, survived because it was funded by unlimited resources, whereas Shenstone struggled to make a living from his.

The creation of Larchill

It was against this background that the ferme ornée and arcadian landscape at Larchill was established. In the early 18th century it was the home farm of a larger property, Phepotstown House. In 1708 Robert Prentice, a Quaker merchant and clothier in Dublin, leased Phepotstown to grow flax for the production of linen, and commenced the development of a ferme ornée on the home farm. He may have drawn inspiration from fermes ornées he visited abroad on his travels as a merchant, but it is more likely that his sources were closer to home. A few kilometres away are the estates of Carton, the seat of the dukes of Leinster, and Castletown, the estate of Thomas Connolly, the speaker of the Irish Parliament. The demesnes of both included lakes, statues and temples. Even closer to Larchill is Dangan, the seat of the earls of Mornington.

During the 1730s and 40s Lord Mornington, grandfather of the Duke of Wellington, developed Dangan as an arcadian landscape, with extensive water features which included lakes and canals.

By 1760 the Prentice family's fortunes declined, their estates were broken up, and Larchill became a separate property. Larchill House assumed its present appearance in about 1780 after additions were made to the farm manager's residence. In 1790 the Watson family leased the estate and continued its development in accordance with the vision of the Prentices. Regrettably subsequent owners failed to appreciate Larchill's aesthetic qualities and it fell into neglect until it was purchased by the current owners in 1994 and gradually restored.

Larchill today

Larchill today comprises approximately 25 hectares of land sloping gently from north to south, the house and farm buildings being at the higher northern end. From here the view takes in the estate with its lake and follies, and a wide panorama of countryside. The distant spire of Maynooth College in the middle distance and the Dublin mountains which close the view are part of the composition in the best traditions of the ferme ornée, where distant views outside the boundaries were visually incorporated into the design.

The boundaries of Larchill are defined by conifer and broadleaf plantations. From the road which borders the demesne on the east a drive guarded by a Gothic lodge leads to the understated Georgian house, framed on each side by mature plantations. The lawn in front of the house is bounded by a ha-ha with an elongated fishpond forming the ditch. Behind the house are extensive farm buildings, and to the west is the walled garden, now rescued from grazing cattle and restored to an 18th century design. The centrepiece of the walled garden is a pond in which stands an early 18th century statue of Meleager, the boar hunter of classical legend. Originally located in the lake, it may have had greater relevance there than in its present location.

The most prominent feature of the walled garden is the cockle shell tower, commanding a magnificent prospect of the demesne and the distant countryside. Creeper-clad and surrounded by foliage, it could have been plucked from a landscape painting brought home by a grand tourist. The rooms are lined with elaborate patterns of inlaid shells. Such towers were common in picturesque gardens in England and France, as at Radway Grange at Edgehill in England, and at the Désert de Retz at Marly near Paris, where the tower takes the form of a broken classical column.

Opening off the south wall of the garden is the ornamental dairy. Dairies such as this were popular elements of the ferme ornée, where the products of simple rural life could be sampled, if not actually made. The walls of the Larchill dairy were originally decorated with panels of early 19th century Dutch tiles depicting battle scenes, possibly of the Peninsular War, but were removed by a former owner. Hints of historical associations such as these recur throughout the Larchill demesne. Further research is needed to interpret the design features of the estate, which appear to incorporate themes relating to current fashions, political events and personal narratives relevant to the owners. Immediately to the west of the walled garden is the Gothic model farm housing rare breeds of pigs, goats, fowls and pigeons in arch-windowed, battlemented

Sketch plan of Larchill Estate.

The Cowthorpe oak planted at Murndal (Tahara) in 1886, a seedling from the immense oak at Cowthorpe in Yorkshire.

photo Tracey Kruger

shelters. The location of the dairy and Gothic farm next to the walled garden, in contrast to the location of the working farm yard out of sight behind the house, emphasises the essentially recreational rather than practical nature of the ferme ornée.

From the walled garden two walks meander through the arcadian landscape, one through the woodlands on the perimeter of the demesne and one through the open pasture, both ultimately leading to the lake. After passing a Chinese prayer statue and lantern, the next prominent feature is the mausoleum. Ireland is as rich in mausoleums as it is in gardens, but Larchill's was built as an ornament to the landscape and not for occupation. A circular stone mound is surmounted by a colonnade of roughly hewn stone. The interior, which would have contained the burial chamber, replicates a fox's earth, and is entered from a semi-circular courtyard. According to local legend, it was built by a former owner whose excessive enthusiasm for fox hunting led to his belief that he would be reincarnated as a fox.

Further down the hill a small enclosure which has been transformed into another walled garden was originally a sheepfold, whose inhabitants when roaming the meadows would have contributed to the desired atmosphere of pastoral tranquillity. Almost at the lake's edge is a rather enigmatic feature, a circular earth mound planted with beech trees. Known as feuilles, these were symbolic of the many ancient structures found in the Irish countryside, ranging from prehistoric burial mounds to the mottes of Norman castles, and were intended to impart an air of antiquity to the surrounds.

The most prominent component of the Larchill landscape is the lake, which with the other water features forms a complex hydraulic system linking the ornamental and practical aspects of the ferme ornée, the arcadian landscape and the historical and political themes which permeate its design. A ditch separates the lawn in front of the house from the planting to the west, and drains the immediate environs of the house and farm. It then flows into an eel pond, with an eel house on the banks, after which it feeds the ponds bounding the southern edge of the lawn. The ditch continues down to the lake, interrupted by a miniature waterfall. Box drains from the meadows also feed the lake. Formerly when the estate was larger, the water overflowed from the lake down cascades into a canal and then into a second lake, before joining a natural stream. A construction visible on the lakebed before its restoration is thought to be a device for draining the lake.

It seems probable that these elaborate aquatic arrangements constituted a fish farm, the ponds from time to time having to be drained for maintenance. Its economic significance to the estate is indicated by the weathervane in the form of a fish on the farm buildings. An 18th century treatise on fish farming stated that 'these ponds should be placed one above another … which will be beautiful as well as profitable'. Beauty and profit were, in theory at least, the essence of a ferme ornée.

Not only was the three-hectare lake a source of beauty and profit, but also of recreation. One of the more bizarre activities carried on in some 18th and early 19th century gardens was the staging of mock naval battles. The Dashwood family of West Wycombe and Lord Byron's family at Newstead Abbey in England were particular enthusiasts. Closer to Larchill on the lake at Dangan Lord Mornington's family and friends would participate in battles between model warships large enough to carry two combatants, and the defenders of an island fort named Gibraltar.

The lake at Larchill has two islands, on one of which is a battlemented fort with five towers, also called Gibraltar, and on the other a circular stone temple of primitive design, originally with a sloping roof which drained into a central pool. Between the two islands was the statue of Meleager, now removed for its preservation to the walled garden and replaced by a statue of Bacchus. Britain's naval wars were undoubtedly the inspiration for the naming of the fort and the mock battles attempting its capture. Gibraltar, a British possession since 1713, had withstood so many sieges that by the 19th century the name had imprinted itself on the national psyche as a symbol of British supremacy. The statue of Meleager the hunter in its original position in the middle of the lake would at first seem incongruous, but this too may have been a subtle reference to naval warfare. HMS *Meleager* was a frigate which fought in Nelson's fleet until it was wrecked in 1801. Perhaps a member of the family served on the ship.

The inspiration for the circular temple on the other island may have derived from the fantasising in fashionable circles in the late 18th century of a supposed Druidic past in Britain and Ireland. A Grand Lodge of Irish Druids existed in the 1790s, whose activities included summer excursions to members' estates. The temple could have been part of the stage setting for such events, as could a seat by the entrance lodge and the gazebo seat on the far side of the lake looking past Gibraltar towards the house. Both are of a deliberately primitive design similar to that of the temple and mausoleum. Such pagan associations may well have contributed to the sinister reputation acquired by Larchill amongst the local population.

Restoration

When the present owners purchased Larchill in 1994, they commenced the long task of restoration to remedy years of neglect. The lake had been drained, cattle grazed in the walled garden, and most of the garden follies were overgrown or in ruins. In recognition of Larchill's immense cultural value as one of the few remaining fermes ornées in Europe, grants from Irish and European conservation authorities were made to assist the project. The garden follies and lake have been restored and rare breeds of sheep and cattle again graze the pastures against a background of woodlands, which have now achieved a maturity of more than two centuries.

The restored lake has become the focal point of a rich ecosystem. The banks have been planted with meadow species which attract a rich insect life, which in turn attracts wildlife, so that the lake is now the home of swans, wild duck, newts, lizards and coots which thrive amongst the marsh rushes. The surrounding hedgerows have been rejuvenated by the almost forgotten craft of hedge laying and more are planned using native species embellished with forsythia and honeysuckle. Larchill today must appear more as its founders envisaged than it ever did in their lifetimes.

An Australian cousin?

The ferme ornée never took root in Australia, having passed out of fashion in Britain when Australian farming was in its pioneering stage, and where in any case farming was always

Rodon Bomford, William Francis Cooke, Cecil Pybus Cooke and Trevor Winter outside the conservatory, Murndal homestead, Victoria 1880.

State Library of Victoria, Winter Cooke family papers MS 10840

Back view of homestead buildings, Murndal homestead, c1870.

State Library of Victoria, Winter Cooke family papers MS 10840

strictly practical. For the same reasons, arcadian landscapes with follies and ornaments were not created in the Antipodes. The elaborate gardens which surrounded some large homesteads were usually expressed as well defined oases in otherwise uncultivated pastures. Only in rare instances were extensive areas of estates distant from the homestead ever planted in a style approaching that of Capability Brown.

One such example is Murndal in the Western District of Victoria, founded by Samuel Pratt Winter in 1837, and now listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. The Winter family had owned Agher estate in County Meath, Ireland since the 17th century, but in 1833 Samuel Winter, several of his brothers and their sister Arbella had emigrated to Van Diemen's Land and then to Victoria. Here Winter established Murndal in rich country on the Wannon River. Samuel Winter remained single but Arbella married a neighbouring squatter Cecil Pybus Cooke. Their descendants inherited Murndal. The Winter family who remained in Ireland continued to own Agher until the 1940s, when financial pressures led to the sale of the estate and demolition of the house.

Samuel Winter attempted to recreate in the Western District the world he had left behind, bringing to Murndal family portraits and relics and surrounding his stone-gabled, mullion-windowed homestead with a garden which could have done credit to many substantial estates in Ireland. He also landscaped the estate well beyond the garden's confines. Copses of trees were planted on hilltops to create vistas, and a series of descending lakes created by damming a creek was reached through an avenue of elms. The lakes were used for picnics and boating, rather than mock naval battles, and the eye catchers on the islands were large bushes of pampas grass, rather than forts and temples. The surrounding valley was planted with elms, hawthorns, poplars, cypress, oaks and eucalypts.

Samuel Winter's birthplace of Agher is only a few kilometres from both Larchill and Dangan, and although it is unknown whether he ever visited Larchill, he would certainly have been familiar with Dangan, Larchill's major inspiration. As the birthplace of the Duke of Wellington, it became one of the most visited places in Ireland after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. It is not difficult to discern a similarity between these beautiful waterscapes on opposite sides of the globe.

Larchill is a rare survivor of the ferme ornée and arcadian landscape concepts. Unlike such grand examples as Marie Antoinette's ferme ornée, and Capability Brown's landscapes such as that at Blenheim Palace, it is the country gentleman's version of both. Murndal is the country gentleman's version transplanted to the Antipodes.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Mr Michael de Las Casas for permission to use his plan of Larchill, and for allowing me to visit the estate on a day when it was not open to the public. Having it to myself was a wonderful opportunity to experience to the full the beauty and tranquillity of that rare landscape. Sitting on the hermit's seat looking across to the lake and fort felt like being a figure in a Poussin painting. Also thanks to Mr James Howley of Dublin, architect and author, for sharing his immense knowledge of Irish garden architecture with me.

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Tim Gatehouse is a retired lawyer who is interested in the pre gold rush history of Victoria, architectural history and the history of gardening. His articles on these subjects have appeared in various journals.

Jeff Brownrigg

for Barbara Blackman, April 2015

In Mr Glover's summer garden

Betty Churcher walks with John Glover through a painting of his home and garden at Mills Plain, Van Diemen's Land.

Mr Glover, with permission –
I'll call you John, now, if I may?
Tell me how you made the picture …
Caught the essence of this day.

I have a view, of course. That's fitting.
Explain to me just what you've done.
Please walk me through your English garden –
Bared to the ravages of sun.

One hundred years and more have vanished
It's only now our ways can cross,
The void between respective goings
Brimming with treasures and with dross.

Mrs Churcher … Betty's better!
Let me guide you through the piece –
A bagatelle, and nothing grander,
The outcome of one season's lease.

If words were my preferred expression,
I'd give them to you by the score.
But oily wash and thick impasto –
These are the things I have in store.

Unlike you, whose lines are legion –
Prose and sketches side by side –
I boast a host of finished pictures
Many relish, few deride.

Please amble through these banks of flowers.
Left and right the beds outspread
March on towards exotic palms
That mark a boundary. As I said

My pictures are the things to ponder …
Your questions even I might ask …
The mystery that underpins
The finished product and the task.

What are the roots of inspiration?
How is this new image true?
Let me tell you how I see it.
The rest is really up to you.

But I will do my best to answer,
To tell you what you seek to know,
Remember these are works of age –
In every sense, an afterglow.

Thank you, John, I'm keen to hear you,
Trusting the singer *and the song* –
Enlisting old enduring wisdom!
What could possibly go wrong?

It feels quite strange to meet you here –
Like falling down that rabbit hole
Into a world both strange and curious –
Then finding here a kindred soul.

I'd like to know how you conceive
The lines and colours, shapes and plan.
What are things that set you painting?
Where is the place that you began?

Think you're telling me a story.
Say what the picture has to say …
A thousand words, at least, to conjure
The rationale for this display.

John Glover, 'A view of the artist's house and garden, in Mills Plains, Van Diemen's Land', 1835.

Art Gallery of South Australia

That's your house and this, your garden –
No distant views of town or sea –
But all wrapped up in grey-green distance …
This floral iconography.

Perhaps it's best to start with 'feelings',
The things we recognise and share;
A stream of conscious, plain disclosure,
While all these elements are near.

Day settles with some sickly yellow
Luminescence in the grey –
A pool of sunlight, almost orange –
Clouds the evening drives away,

Minuscule in their defiance,
Warm vestiges in cooling sky –
Wisps, like some vague recollection –
Beasts in a cloudy topiary.

Nothing moves here. Dust has settled.
Summer coils a sinuous band,
And bonded in an open contract,
Summarily claims the land.

Drooping now in sweeping pastures -
Dryness limiting their scope –
Gasping native flora suffers,
(Though hardier than heliotrope).

These neat contrivances of order
Tame the Bush's spacious ease –
Parched into a strict compliance,
Thinly scattered, wiry trees …

Your hollyhocks defy the season.
Still, you struggle and you see
In alien shapes and fearful forces.
Ciphers of mortality?

Far from your mulchy English forests,
Flowers from that other Hemisphere
Provide a little restitution,
Some sanity and salve for here.

Along the blue-grey ridge line cowering,
Ragged eucalyptus trees
Bunch, a curtain clumped together
Masking far extremities.

No 'rooky woods' or night that thickens!
Here the dazzling light of day
Scours and cleanses with derision.
The sun, once risen, has his way.

Then, after dark, the moon's cool lantern
Lights each corner of my fields.
From those dim paddocks, alien voices,
Reassuring, though concealed

In nooks and copses, floating softly
On the antipodean breeze,
Breathe life into the foreign darkness.
I've grown accustomed, by degrees.

And at our feet a proclamation –
Pinks and yellows, whites and blues,
Delphiniums, I think, and roses,
Blooms of such bright and cheery hues.

But this is not the 'real' scene, really,
Transcribed unchanged in any way.
The dream you paint here's so much grander.
You've stretched, enlarged the brave array.

We walk a path, enveloped in
A bright assertion. You'll agree
That things you notice trigger dreams –
Building such joyful symmetry

In Patterdale – this other Eden.
You catch the place in every mood.
Dancing figures, firelight, rainbows …
Like these clustered blooms intrude

Upon a quite primeval vista.
But you populate the scene
With sympathy for those who lived here –
Create for us what might have been.

You're right, of course, this lovely garden
Carries a stamp of earlier time …
Shields, against the rough predations
Of the Scribbly Sublime!

Before a final form congeals
I struggle with whatever fires
Imagination. (You will know).
In Patterdale, the land inspires.

Sometimes these hints of pastoral
Tranquillity, transform the place;
And human beings mollify
The lonely charm of scruffy grace.

Landscapes usher potent notions
Of Man's place. That's what I see,
Among strange plants that shed their skins –
These trees of transparent canopy,

Whose bark can tumble into tangles.
The twigs and leaves beneath the feet
Crunch, their rapid desiccation
Within a fortnight quite complete.

Against this unexpected difference,
I plant my Lakeland daffodils,
Inflict a golden spectacle
To soften drab, surrounding hills.

And there (amongst them), native people –
Sable owners of this place –
Tolerate, uncomprehending,
Every challenge, each disgrace.

Those who lived here left few marks –
Accepting what the world provided.
Just Nature's bounty, more or less,
Until their lives and ours collided.

Ancient Glover sees it all.
He understands the role of Fate!
(So little here's the same as England.)
Age grants the right to remonstrate.

I am not frail, as some would have it;
Not demented and not blind.
I cultivate quite new expression,
Deploying skills I'd left behind.

Rows and beds and plotted patches
Intersect in bold display,
Counterpointing lines of order
Nurtured amongst disarray.

To see, then know, and find expression
Pressing to be understood:
The cleansing flames that shape that vision,
Searing it into the blood …

Yes, that's the task of cultivation –
Nostalgia cleaving new and old
Into curious contortions,
Engendering fresh tales, untold.

'The English Claude' in confrontation
With a New World, from behind,
Debilitating custom blurs
Eyes' innocence and what they find.

But I accept (with resignation),
Some differences I cannot change
Beyond a pointed recognition
Of the various and strange –

The need to apprehend a landscape
Dictated by the things I see,
Not built of other's expectations.
That's the essential alchemy.

Tending, then, new scraps of feeling,
Fondling a lively, growing past,
I grow in steady comprehension,
Fortify what cannot last.

What a pleasure, this encounter!
You've ratified, without a doubt
Things I have always understood -
Much I've often thought about.

Freed from my earthly obligations
I've time now to interrogate
A host of people. You're the first.
Perhaps this will precipitate

A fund of interviews in which
Selected subjects might well be
Whatever fancy moves us most;
Selected by both you and me?

So many things to be examined!
Could Rodin be the place start?
I've spent time with his lovely bronzes –
A pinnacle of sculptor's art.

Just a boy in your time, really…
But I might venture to suggest,
Those things in Canberra's lakeside garden –
Things I've always liked the best.

Mr Glover, that was splendid.
I've made some notes of your advice.
Next time we might reflect upon
The Gates of Hell … and Paradise.

Adjunct Professor Jeff Brownrigg is a senior research fellow at the Australian National University. His published works include biographies of Australians who deserve to be better known, essays exploring aspects of Australian and international cultural heritage. For 30 years he held various senior positions at the National Film and Sound Archive.

Peter Sergel

The story of NZ's Hamilton Gardens

How do you develop a really ambitious garden on an old city dump site with hardly any budget in the initial phases? A group of people in Hamilton, New Zealand, have done just that.

In the 1960s, Hamilton Gardens was a bleak city rubbish dump covered in blackberries with seagulls circling above. Remnants of the Gardens' earlier history as a pre-European pa, British military post, Victorian rifle-range and dog-dosing station lay scattered across the site. Four acres which had been part of the Hamilton East Town Belt were passed over to Hamilton City Council for the purposes of a public garden; an opening ceremony for Hamilton Gardens was held on 24 July 1960. The site now extends over 54 hectares.

The gardens were awarded the prestigious International Garden Tourism Award at the International Garden Tourism Network conference in France in 2014, an award previously given to the Singapore Botanic Gardens and the botanic gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle in Merano, Italy. Looking around the gardens today, it is hard to remember the area as it was in the 1960s, filled with piles of refuse and swarming with rats and seagulls. Occasionally interesting things still come to the surface but you'll be pleased (or possibly disappointed) to hear that the rats and seagulls have gone.

In the early years development of the gardens depended on government-subsidised labour schemes, donated materials and sponsorship, with the plants being grown in the on-site nursery. Initially community support came from local horticultural groups but as work started on new gardens such as the Chinese Scholars' garden or Japanese garden, different cultural groups also became involved. A strong community of interest has developed around Hamilton Gardens and

Indian Char Bagh ('enclosed four part') Garden, Hamilton Gardens.

The Char Bagh or 'enclosed four part' form of garden spread throughout the Muslim world between the 8th and 18th centuries. Its complex symbolism has ancient roots in Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. Such gardens had a focus on water and irrigation because of their origin in the hot and dry climate of present-day Iran.

©Hamilton Gardens 2017

there are a number of associated groups. The most important group is the Friends of Hamilton Gardens, who contribute thousands of hours of voluntary work every year (as well as supplying cake to the director of the gardens).

Over the past 35 years 15 trusts have been formed to raise funds for specific gardens and events. At present the Hamilton Gardens Development Trust is raising funds for new gardens. Another trust organises an annual Hamilton Gardens Arts Festival. This event is held in different garden areas each February and has grown to become the region's biggest arts festival.

Top: Artist's impression of proposed Mansfield Garden, Hamilton Gardens.

Middle: Te Parapara Garden, Hamilton Gardens, a food production and storage garden based on traditional Maori practices.

Bottom: Tropical Garden, Hamilton Gardens.

©Hamilton Gardens 2017

For the past 30 years an onsite branch of the local polytechnic has taught horticulture, landscape design, arboriculture and floristry courses. Staff there often use the gardens as their outdoor classroom and soccer pitch. Each week horticultural students spend a day working alongside gardens staff – the best ones often end up with a permanent job. Links are also being developed between the gardens and the University of Waikato's history research unit, with a research foundation currently being established.

Over a thousand events are held in the gardens each year, an indication of the extent of community involvement and support for Hamilton Gardens. The location between State Highway One and an attractive stretch of the Waikato River ensures that there is, as some Australian visitors tell us, 'more water than you can shake a stick at'. To be fair we haven't felt compelled to try doing that, but we do have consent to take water from the river all year round.

Sustainable garden management practices include supporting the conservation of native wildlife such as native long-tailed bats and bellbirds through planting, habitat protection and predator control; ongoing planting programs and the propagation and distribution of locally environmentally sourced New Zealand plants for restoration work; sourcing all irrigation and most of the water for water features from the Waikato River; and conserving water through night time irrigation, mulching, monitoring and recycling.

Hamilton Gardens presents the history of gardens, not just with plant collections, sculptures and pavilions, but by showing us the history of gardens around the world through the themes of different civilisations, from an ancient Egyptian Garden to a modern concept garden. There is a local flavour in the pre-European Maori garden called Te Parapara, and one of the four new gardens under development is a re-created early 19th century New Zealand garden featuring the elements Katherine Mansfield described in her famous 1922 story *The garden party*.

These four will join the Zen Garden, Italian Renaissance Garden, the 18th century Kitchen Garden and others at Hamilton Gardens in demonstrating our approaches to the art of gardening in different times and different places.

Dr Peter Sergel is the founder and director of Hamilton Gardens. He is an Associate of Honour of the Royal Institute of Horticulture.

John Leslie Dowe

In memory of an ornamental fountain, 1880–1958

Botanic Gardens are dynamic entities. Redevelopment may remove or obscure some historically important aspects, seemingly unconsciously. The City Botanic Gardens, Brisbane, has been among the most redeveloped public gardens in Australia, and this article provides an account of one unique location that has been assigned to the historical memory.

Although much has been written about the history of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens (now City Botanic Gardens), very little has been published about an impressive ornamental fountain and an associated circle of palms that were removed during redevelopment in 1958. The location of the fountain can be seen in the map on page 26.

The whole northwestern section of the Gardens, extending from Parliament House to the Brisbane River, was originally known as Queen's Park and was managed separately to the Botanic Gardens proper. It was added to the Gardens in 1865 under the management of Director Walter Hill. In practice, the northern half of Queen's Park between Edward and Albert Streets was used as sports fields, whilst only the southern half between Albert and George Streets was included in the Gardens. Hill wrote:

> *The addition will have the effect of enlarging the botanical grounds, properly so called, by about 10 acres [four hectares], and when the preparation[s] now in progress for laying out the walks, tilling the soil, and storing it with foliaceous trees and plants of varied*

View of the terraces and the original iron fountain soon after completion in 1880–81, with Queensland Parliament House in the background. The fountain can be seen in the middle-right.

John Oxley Library, negative 183089

Left: The Simmonds stone fountain, photographed in 1938. The fountain was erected in the Brisbane Botanic Gardens in 1883.

John Oxley Library, negative 114753

Middle: Map of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens, 1897, prepared by Philip MacMahon, showing the location of the ornamental fountain and terraces (above Parliament House in lower left, depicted by a circle within a square).

Queensland Agricultural Journal 1897

Right: View from the roof of the Queensland Parliament House circa 1889. The fountain and garden beds are in the foreground.

John Oxley Library, image APO-040-0001-0006

> *floral beauty, as well as of commercial value, have been carried out, the general view in approaching the Gardens will be unmeasurably increased in picturesqueness and interest.* (Annual Report, *1867)*

Despite Hill's intentions, the area remained underdeveloped except for the planting of trees on the frontages to Alice and George Streets, and it was not until 1880 that a serious start was made in constructing paths and creating gardens.

Being on a slope between Parliament House and the Albert Street entrance, the area was excavated to form three terraces connected by stone steps (see map). Hill wrote:

> *The first level will be divided into a croquet ground and a bowling Green ... the second level will be laid out in flower-beds on grass plot, surrounding an iron fountain of chaste design, which has been ordered from England at a cost of £40. The third level will also be laid out and planted in judicious situations and a double row of palm trees will be planted to form a vista from opposite the principal entrance to the Parliamentary Buildings to the fountain.* (Annual Report, *1879)*

The terracing and placement of the fountain were completed by July 1880 (*Annual Report*, 1880). Only two surviving photos of the fountain have been located by this author. From the better photo, it can be seen that the fountain was three-tiered with the bowl widths at a ratio of about 1:2:4 with the smallest bowl at the top, each held on a sleek baluster and with the lowest baluster set on a short column atop a square base.

With the retirement of Walter Hill in February 1881, James Pink was appointed as his replacement under the title of Head Gardener in March 1881. Although the Gardens were administered by the Department of Public Lands, they were in effect managed by a Board of Trustees. At this time no more landscape design and construction had been done to the area immediately around the fountain and it remained as lawn. However there were problems with the fountain. Pink wrote:

> *The basin of the fountain in the centre of the middle terrace is cracked through in several places, which causes a considerable leakage ... The present naked and forlorn appearance of this fountain would be greatly relieved by small beds cut out in the grass around its base.* (Annual Report, *1882)*

Subsequently a decision was made to replace the original fountain, and Pink wrote:

> *The small iron fountain, so ill adapted to the position it occupied, has been removed, and replaced by a beautiful substitute in carved stone, and one which is a decided credit to colonial design and workmanship, being the work of Mr. Simmonds of this city.* (Annual Report, *1883)*

The 'Mr. Simmonds' referred to was the stonemason business of three generations known as 'J. Simmonds', then situated in Adelaide Street, Brisbane. The business was founded in Melbourne in 1852 by John Simmonds Snr (1793–1860), then, after his death, passed on to his son John Simmonds Jnr (1828–1889). In 1880, John Simmonds Jnr relocated to Brisbane and with his son John Howard Simmonds Snr (1862–1955) carried on the business. John Howard Simmonds Snr took over management in 1889 upon the death of his father, and operated it until his own retirement in 1920. His son, John Howard

(Jack) Simmonds Jnr (1905–1992), did not follow in the family tradition but became an internationally recognised plant pathologist.

The Simmonds' stone fountain was in the Renaissance-revival style with motifs incorporating leaves and shells. It had a single spout at the top. The first garden beds were formed around the fountain in 1885. Pink wrote that 'an ornamental design in flower-beds has been laid out and planted on the upper terrace' (*Annual Report*, 1885). The arrangement can be seen in the photograph taken from the top of Parliament House. Pink, however, fell into disfavour with the Board of Trustees and was dismissed in August 1886. He was replaced by the Kew-trained horticulturist Alexander Menzies Cowan as Head Gardener. Cowan oversaw drainage of the terraces between 1886 and 1888.

Cowan also clashed with the Board of Trustees and resigned in 1889. Control of the botanic gardens was taken over by the Department of Agriculture, and a new Curator, Philip John MacMahon (1857–1911) was appointed with the intention of elevating the standard of the Gardens to those in other Australian cities. MacMahon was trained at Kew Gardens and had been Curator of Hull Botanic Gardens, England, 1882–87. He introduced some bold landscape initiatives into the Brisbane Gardens, such as the long avenues of palms and weeping figs, and reconfigured some of the main pathways. MacMahon had a deep admiration for palms and significantly increased the Gardens' collection.

Although no records have survived, it appears that the palm circle around the fountain was planted by MacMahon, very soon after he became Curator in April 1889. The palms in the circle included the queen palm (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) and the alexandra palm (*Archontophoenix alexandrae*). When the garden beds were removed by MacMahon in 1890, the palms were left in place, with lawns extended up to their bases.

MacMahon continued as Curator until 1905 after which he took on the role of Director of Forests for Queensland. He was replaced as Curator by John Frederick Bailey who wrote:

> *The pretty fountain in front of the Houses of Parliament, which had not been in use for some years, was recently repaired at a small cost, and planted with water lilies. (Annual Report, 1906).*

Top: Postcard from circa 1909, showing the fountain in action and the maturing circle of palms.

Bottom: Postcard of the fountain and palm circle circa 1955, a few years before the removal of the fountain and palms.

Collection of the author

Photographs from this period mostly show the fountain in operation.

During the ensuing decades, the fountain and palm circle remained intact. However, for most of the time the fountain was not operational, although it was reported in 1927 that the fountain basin had been made into a children's wading pool (*Brisbane Courier*, 26 November 1927). Both the fountain and the palms remained in place until 1958 when the terraces were extensively redeveloped. The ultimate fate of the fountain, whether relocated, stored or destroyed, has not been established.

Dr John Leslie Dowe is an adjunct research fellow at the Australian Tropical Herbarium, James Cook University, Cairns, and specialises in the systematics, taxonomy and history of the palm family (*Arecaceae*). He was formerly curator of the Townsville Palmetum, the only botanic garden in Australia devoted to palms. He was co-author of the palm treatment for the *Flora of Australia* vol 39 (CSIRO Publishing 2011).

Anne Cochrane

Saving seeds: conserving our natural heritage

A seed orchard of threatened plant species near Albany, Western Australia. Wire cages protect young plants from grazing by rabbits and kangaroos.

photo Anne Cochrane

Seeds provide half the calories consumed by people today, and they have also helped humans to evolve. In essence, the seeds of annual cereals such as rice, wheat and maize underpinned the rise of civilisation. Once people realised they could control their food supply by farming, human societies began to settle and grow. Over subsequent millennia, farmers retained seeds from plants with higher yield and more pleasant taste, and the art of domestication and breeding commenced. Seed banks have a significant role in safeguarding the conservation of plant genetic diversity on which our food security rests. This article describes some of the activities of the Australian Seed Bank Partnership.

Modern crop species are the result of sophisticated programs of breeding and genetic improvement designed to meet the needs of large-scale agriculture. Many of these crop species are now sown as monocultures and as such are at risk of succumbing to stresses such as changing climates and pests or diseases. Resilience is stronger when there is a diversity of plants rather than a monoculture. The old 'landraces' (traditionally or locally adapted) and wild varieties of these new cultivars are therefore vitally important as they represent the genetic diversity necessary to develop new resistant cultivars, helping to provide resilience to emerging risks. Saving seeds is even more important now than it was generations ago. The world's population is forecast to rise to close to 10 billion by 2050, our farming land and our natural environments are under intense pressure, and the climate of the world is changing. Consequently, conserving seeds in banks is crucial to our future wellbeing.

Historical perspective

One of the first true 'seed banks' was set up in 1926 in St Petersburg, Russia, by botanist and geneticist Nikolai Vavilov. In principle, seed banking is straightforward and relies on the seeds of most (about 90%) seed-bearing plant species surviving air-drying and then freezing, which extends the longevity of these so-called 'orthodox' seeds in predictable ways. Since the 1960s, government agencies, international organisations, NGOs, and private philanthropies have invested heavily in the creation of seed banks. For example, halfway between the mainland of Norway and the North Pole, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault holds the world's largest collection of crop diversity. Deep in the permafrost – although a changing climate affects even permafrost – seeds from the crop species from around the globe are stored as the ultimate insurance policy for the world's food supply. Also in the northern hemisphere, the Millennium Seed Bank at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (Wakehurst Place) holds the largest and most diverse wild plant species genetic resource in the world, mostly seed contributed by a global network of seed banks. These collections serve as permanent repositories for the world's vast genetic diversity in food crops and, increasingly, its diversity in wild plants.

Australia's contribution to seed banking

The Australian Seed Bank Partnership (http://seedpartnership.org.au) is an alliance of 12 organisations, bringing together expertise from Australia's leading botanic gardens, state environment agencies and NGOs governed by the Council of Heads of Australian Botanic Gardens. Members focus their work on securing Australian wild plant species in off-site seed collections, and at the same time enhance knowledge of native seed biology through research. This knowledge helps to improve conservation and restoration outcomes for the Australian flora. Building seed collections provides a resource for future use and an insurance policy for the nation's native plants against threats such as land clearing, salinity and weed invasion and diseases such as myrtle rust and cinnamon fungus, which also affect garden plants.

The seed banks of the Australian Seed Bank Partnership are an important national resource for the conservation of Australia's native plant species, in particular those that are rare, threatened and poorly known. The research and collection outcomes are shared through an online database, the Atlas of Living Australia. One of the partnership's collaborators is the Australian Grains Genebank; under its Australian Crop Wild Relatives project, members will collect and improve the current stores of indigenous crop wild varieties, and enhance collections of endemic plant species.

The Australian seed partnership grew from individual seed bank involvement in the Millennium Seed Bank Project. Between 2000 and 2010, through this global seed conservation partnership, Australia conserved seed from more than 8000 of our native species, predominantly those species considered at risk of extinction. This effort by the Australian seed bank partners contributed to the Millennium Seed Bank Project's success in having 10% of the world's dryland flora in ex situ collections by 2010. The challenge now is to conserve an additional 15% of the world's flora by 2020. Australian seed banks are contributing to this goal through the Australian Seed Bank Partnership's 1000 Species Project.

Left: Collecting seed of a small annual.
photo Andrew Crawford

Right: Bagging developing fruits of grevillea helps to ensure mature seed is collected.
photo Anne Cochrane

Top: Performing germination tests to assess the viability of the seed before storage.
photo Anne Cochrane

Middle: A handful of the Western Australian feather flower, *Verticordia*.

Bottom: Seeds are germinated on agar in glass dishes, under controlled conditions in the laboratory.
photos Andrew Crawford

Capturing and curating genetic diversity

Seed collection is not just about grabbing a handful of seed from the most bountiful plant. It is about trying to represent the diversity of the population or species. Small amounts of seed from many plants is much better than lots of seed from a few plants.

When collection of seed by hand picking proves difficult, seed bags are used to make sure sufficient seed can be collected for the intended purpose. These muslin bags let light and moisture pass through, and are placed around developing fruits allowing the maturation process to continue unhindered.

Collecting is only one aspect of the seed conservation process. The collections need to be curated to a high standard to ensure seed longevity is not compromised. Seeds are processed and quantified before testing and storage.

In many cases, seeds are easily extracted from their fruits; but some require just that little more work, for example the woody fruits of *Banksia* require heating for seed release.

Seed collection quality has an impact on the usability of the seed resource and so seeds are tested for their viability, mainly by germinating samples, although X-ray machines and destructive chemical tests can also be used to assess viability.

Preserved for posterity

Once seeds are cleaned and quantified they can be dried and frozen. But not all seed can be stored at sub-zero temperatures and alternative means of storage may be required.

Drying seed at temperatures of around 15–20° C and at low humidity (~15% relative humidity) is a benign way to reduce seed water content before freezing. Drying of seed is necessary to prevent crystallisation of free water in the cells, and increases seed longevity in storage.

The collections are an insurance policy, but most importantly they provide a resource for the reintroduction and restoration of declining species. Many partners of the Australian Seed Bank Partnership are active in reintroducing threatened species back into the wild.

Scientific research

Many Australian Seed Bank Partnership members conduct scientific research into their collections to gain insight into the biology and ecology of the species targeted for collection. This kind of research also contributes to getting more native plant species into horticulture and available for the home gardener. Much of the research revolves around the need to be able to re-establish the species back into the wild, either through reintroduction or restoration.

Dr Anne Cochrane is a senior research scientist with the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia. She manages the Threatened Flora Seed Centre, a seed bank for the conservation of rare, threatened and poorly known native plant species from Western Australia, and is currently researching the impact of a warming drying climate on the ability of seeds to germinate.

For the bookshelf

John Dwyer (2016) *Weeds, plants and people*

PenFolk Publishing, Melbourne (www.penfolk.com.au), paperback, xv + 293 pp, RRP $49.95

John Dwyer's book on weeds and their relationship to human culture and society is a work of scholarship developed over many years, and underpinned by his PhD research on this topic. The book draws on resources from the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Herbarium, and conference presentations road tested at meetings of the Weed Society of Victoria and the Council of Australasian Weed Societies. Professor Tim Entwisle provided the foreword – a thoughtful introductory piece that identifies the book's key strengths. The book's publication was supported by AGHS's Kindred Spirits Fund.

The introduction explores human psychology in relation to weeds, proposing that we are frightened of plants that grow where we don't want them, and explaining why we use emotive and subjective language when we talk about them. John calls for objective language and thinking about weeds, taking British historical ecologist Oliver Rackham's long view that weeds are 'highly specialized plants intimately linked to farming', and part of the historic flora of the 'ordinary landscape … made by both the natural world and by human activities, interacting with each other over many centuries'. Our tendency to describe weed behaviour with emotive terms such as 'invading' rather than 'spreading' or 'infesting' rather than 'being present' gives the impression that plant behaviour is the problem, and underestimates the contributions humans have made to weed incursions globally.

The frontispiece reproduction of Albrecht Dürer's stunning 1503 watercolour *Das grosse Rasenstück*, depicting several European grass and herb species that have made their presence felt as weeds in Australia, was a very appropriate choice. The painting invites closer and thoughtful inspection of the weed species it depicts, as does John's writing. It was a treat to learn that two of my significant historical luminaries – John Evelyn and John Claudius Loudon – had strong views about the value (or otherwise) of particular weed species. Dating back much further, it was fascinating to discover which weeds were consumed or gathered by prehistoric humans. John argues that 26 species found under these circumstances have documented history as food or medicinal plants, supporting the idea that they have been cultivated since very ancient times.

The illustrations throughout feature colour reproductions of herbarium specimens. While of value to demonstrate that weeds can be found anywhere (and by anyone), some of these species may not be immediately recognisable in preserved form – photos of living specimens would likely have helped readers not so familiar with these plants.

The final chapter presents a call to rethink the broadscale use of herbicides that we currently employ in our landscapes. While the notion of returning to mechanical/cultural control methods for roadside is appealing, there is little sign that potential risks from herbicide use will be enough to overcome economic drives for effective weed control in agricultural and other broadscale landscapes. This would have been an opportunity to explore the complex discussions and negotiations that will be needed across the broad range of stakeholders who will be part of such a major and costly shift in behaviour.

On a personal note, I found the background detail about the category of 'sleeper weeds' particularly useful. It's challenging to find some of your reliable horticultural performers identified as potential threats – and this triggers a rethink about their inclusion in future teaching programs.

The book includes notes and sources for each chapter, a useful glossary, a plant name index that encompasses both botanical and common names, and an extensive reference list. It is a thoughtful book by an author who has gained a deep scholarly knowledge of a fascinating topic. It's a valuable addition to our ongoing discussion about plants that grow where they're not wanted, and our role in making them a problem.

Dr Sue Murphy is a lecturer in horticulture at the University of Melbourne's Burnley Campus; she has a special interest in weeds.

AGHS Annual General Meeting

The 38th Annual General Meeting of the Australian Garden History Society will be held on Saturday 28 October 2017 at 12.30pm at the State Library of Victoria, 328 Swanston Street, Melbourne. Items to be included on the agenda should be emailed to the AGHS office (info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

Branches are asked to nominate their representative to the National Management Committee and to inform the Secretary (c/- AGHS office) by COB Thursday 7 September 2017.

AGHS news

Honours for the Florilegium exhibition

The 2016 exhibition 'Florilegium: Sydney's painted garden' curated by garden historian and longstanding AGHS member Colleen Morris has won Best Exhibition in the Events and Exhibitions category of the National Trust Heritage Awards for 2017. This award is presented for exhibitions and displays emphasising and promoting education, interpretation and community engagement.

Colleen Morris (left) and Beth Hise (Sydney Living Museums, right) with the award for the exhibition 'Florilegium: Sydney's painted garden'.

The exhibition featured 87 contemporary botanical paintings illustrating significant plants in the collections of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust. It is touring to Kew Gardens in 2018 (see Exhibitions, page 33).

Awards were presented on 28 April 2017 at Doltone House in Sydney, as part of the Australian Heritage Festival.

From Wilderness to Pleasure Ground

Thanks to the current committee of AGHS's Southern Highlands branch, the collected papers of a past annual conference, *From Wilderness to Pleasure Ground: discovering the garden history of the Southern Highlands*, have been released. The publication includes all but three of the papers given at the October 2008 AGHS conference. As well as documenting the conference itself, the publication is a major contribution to the region's garden history. It will be available through the AGHS website.

Congratulations not only to Dr Meg Probyn for the compilation of the papers, but more importantly to the speakers — Richard Aitken, Ian Bowie, Linda Emery, Stuart Read, Jenny Simons and Jane Lemann — who provided their papers for publication.

Call for papers for 2018 conference

AGHS is seeking speakers for its 39th annual national conference on 26–29 October 2018 in the Southern Highlands at Mittagong, NSW.

Papers are welcome on any topic related to a wide interpretation of the theme *Gardens in times of peace and conflict*. This could include:

- Fighting the war at home – retreat to the garden to dig for victory
- Memorialisation of gardens – avenues of honour, peace gardens
- Multicultural gardens – immigrants adapting their ideas of gardening to Australia
- 'Not in My Backyard' – plants, shade, chemicals and development causing conflicts between neighbours and communities
- Reconciling with the elements – droughts and floods and the effect of climate change
- Fighting the weeds – indigenous and local plants versus exotic species; native species as weeds

Please email a **250-word abstract** with title 'AGHS2018 submission [your surname]' to info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au by **Friday 18 August 2017**. Include a title and explanation of how it addresses the conference theme, technical support required (if known), 100-word biography, and contact details email, telephone, and postal address. We anticipate responding to you by late November 2017.

Dialogue

Tours of the gardens at Melbourne's Rippon Lea

The gardens of 14 acre National Trust property Rippon Lea Estate in Elsternwick are of national significance, with their abundance of trees, sweeping lawns, lake and look-out tower, and notable fernery. During spring 2017 the National Trust is running tours of the gardens with knowledgeable volunteer guides. On the tours, visitors will learn about the development of the estate and hear stories of how this 19th century pleasure garden has been enjoyed by the families who called Rippon Lea home.

Tours of the garden focus on Rippon Lea's social history. Subject to availability on the day, tours will run on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 11 am, and Fridays at 2 pm, from 27 September 2017. Tours are free, but there is a $10 entry fee for the grounds. Entry is free for National Trust members.

See www.ripponleaestate.com.au for more information. For group bookings and private tours of up to 12 people, contact **bookings@nattrust.com.au**

Exhibitions

The Florilegium at Kew Gardens

Margaret Pieroni '*Banksia praemorsa*'.

From Colleen Morris and Louisa J Murray
The Florilegium, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, Celebrating 200 years
(The Florilegium Society at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney 2016)

A Florilegium exhibition will be held at the Shirley Sherwood Gallery at Kew Gardens, England, from **31 March to 16 September 2018**, in the first and main galleries of this wonderful venue. The exhibition is the result of a partnership between the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust in Sydney. All of the paintings from the 2016 Sydney Florilegium exhibition will be on display at Kew. At the same time the temperate house at Kew will reopen after a £25 million, five year restoration program. The original plans and those of the restoration project will be on show in one of Kew's long galleries. This display will complement the Florilegium exhibition. As well as the historical links between the two institutions, particularly through collectors and botanists, the species painted in the Florilegium exhibition are in many cases among those replanted in the historic glasshouse.

The Florilegium project is grateful for the support and encouragement of patron Dr Shirley Sherwood who has worked to bring our Florilegium to Kew Gardens. She will also curate an exhibition of Australian artists from her collection to complete the theme in 2018.

Diary dates

For further details on events, please see the AGHS website or contact the relevant branch.

South Australia

Sunday 20 August 2017

South Australian branch AGM, lunch and speaker

10.45 am Meet in Wittunga Botanic Garden carpark, Shepherds Hill Rd Blackwood for guided walk, followed by AGM (12.30 pm) and lunch at the nearby Belair Hotel. Bookings via Trybooking.

Sunday 10 September 2017

Day bus trip to Coonalpyn – dry land gardening, local art projects, regional history

9 am Depart Adelaide, hearing about settlement and farming as we pass through rural towns. Country style catered lunch and tour of 'Rural Renewal Through the Arts' project incl magnificent Silos Mural, completed 2017. Bookings via Trybooking.

Southern Highlands NSW

Saturday 8 July 2017

Winter seminar

2–4.30 pm, Bradman Museum, Bowral. Stuart Read will talk on 'Brown, green, other colours & players – a tercentenary odyssey', Richard Heathcote on 'Pets and plants fit for French Empress's garden'.

Sunday 20 August 2017

Southern Highlands branch AGM and two presentations

Dr Greg Johnson 'Write to Garden in Australia: 1888 to 1938 (a continuation from Greg's AGHS 2015 lecture 'Quill and Spade – pioneer garden writing in Australia'); Charlotte Webb: 'Parsnips to Picturesque – evolution of gardens in the Southern Highlands'.

AGHS national conferences

2017

Friday 27 – Sunday 29 October 2017

Marvellous Melbourne: the challenge of change

AGHS 2017 annual conference, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne (see p 36).

2018

Friday 26 – Monday 29 October 2018

Gardens in times of peace and conflict

AGHS annual conference, Mittagong, Southern Highlands of NSW.

Tasmania

Sunday 20 August 2017

Tasmanian branch AGM and lecture on Home Hill by Jennifer Stackhouse

2 pm Philip Smith Building, 2 Edward St, Glebe, Hobart. No charge for this meeting. AGHS Tasmanian branch committee member Jennifer Stackhouse is working on a conservation plan for the garden of Home Hill outside Devonport. Home Hill was the home of Sir Joseph Lyons, 10th Prime Minister of Australia, and Dame Enid Lyons, the first woman to be elected to the House of Representatives.

Victoria

Sunday 16 July 2017

Working bee, 'Turkeith', Birregurra

From 10 am. Lifts can be organised. Morning tea and lunch provided. Bring tools suitable for working in a large garden. Contact Fran Faul 03 9853 1369, **franfaul@gmail.com**.

View of Turkeith homestead, Birregurra, Victoria, photographed in about 1880 by Thomas J Washbourne. AGHS's Victorian branch holds working bees in the garden of Turkeith.
State Library of Victoria MS 14402

Thursday 17 August 2017

Winter lecture and Victorian branch AGM (topic and speaker TBC)

6 for 6.30 pm, Mueller Hall, National Herbarium, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra. Members $20, non-members $25, students $10. Book on Trybooking https://www.trybooking.com. Enquiries to Lorraine Powell, Chair, AGHS Victorian branch, **lorraineepowell@gmail.com**.

Sunday 20 August 2017

Working bee, 'Mt Boninyong'

Contact Fran Faul 03 9853 1369, **franfaul@gmail.com**.

Sunday 17 September 2017

Working bee, 'Eurambeen'

Contact Fran Faul 03 9853 1369, **franfaul@gmail.com**.

Sydney and Northern New South Wales

Monday 10 July 2017

Northern NSW branch talk 'Pets and plants fit for a French Empress's garden at Malmaison'

6 pm Function centre, Saumarez, Armidale, talk by AGHS national chair Richard Heathcote. $25, bookings **gwilson42@bigpond.com**.

Saturday 15 July 2017

Sydney guided walk and talk in Callan Park

2–4:30 pm Roslyn Burge and Stuart Read. Members $20, guests $30, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential.

Wednesday 16th August 2017

Short AGM, illustrated talk by Tanya Hoolihan

6 pm for 7– 8.30 pm, Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. 'Beyond exploration – the botanical legacy of Ludwig Leichhardt'. Members $20, guests $30 includes light refreshments. Bookings essential.

ACT Monaro Riverina

Thursday 6 July 2017

Lecture by AGHS patron Sue Ebury

6 pm, Theatre, National Library of Australia, Parkes ACT. 'Visionary or vandal? Lancelot "Capability" Brown and the English landscape', 11th annual joint event with Friends of the National Library of Australia. $15 AGHS members and Friends of the NLA, $20 non-members, includes refreshments. Bookings through the National Library at **http://tix.yt/capability** Note NO bookings to be made through AGHS.

Thursday 24 August 2017

ACT Monaro Riverina branch AGM followed by annual lecture

5.30 for 5.45 pm, Menzies Room, National Archives of Australia, Parkes ACT. Richard Aitken 'Planting Dreams: Shaping Australia Gardens'. $10 members, $15 non-members, includes refreshments.

Western Australia

Sunday 16 July 2017

A day in the country in the Pinjarra area

Sunday 20 August 2017

WA branch AGM, Armadale

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AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

The Australian Garden History Society is a history and heritage partner of the Australian Museum of Gardening.

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Australian Garden History welcomes contributions of any length up to 1200 words. Prospective contributors are strongly advised to contact the editor before submitting text or images.

The views expressed in this journal are those of the contributors and are not necessarily shared by the Australian Garden History Society.

Marvellous Melbourne

THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

38th annual national AGHS conference

For details see the AGHS website **www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au**

'Marvellous Melbourne – the challenge of change' will take place on Friday 27 – Sunday 29 October 2017 at the State Library of Victoria. A day of lectures on Friday will be followed by two days of garden visits, ranging from the grand to the small and experimental. A number of the gardens we will visit are rarely open to the public. Monday's optional day tour will explore the Dandenong Ranges.

The extraordinary growth of Melbourne in the 1880s and the legacy of gold provided the wealth to create mansions and gardens and engendered the civic pride that inspired the development of the city's grand parks and avenues. The conference will explore the social and economic pressures affecting Melbourne's history, and the challenges for conservation, urban planning and garden design in adapting to change.

Speakers include urban historian Professor Graeme Davison AO; Mary Chapman, Parks and Waterways, City of Melbourne; John Rayner, Director of Urban Horticulture, University of Melbourne; Dr Peter Sergal, Director of Hamilton Gardens, NZ; MMBW map enthusiast Malcolm Faul and garden-owner the Hon Justice Julie Dodds-Streeton QC.

PRE-CONFERENCE TOUR

Monday 23 October – Wednesday 25 October 2017

A 3 day/2 night pre-conference tour based in Camperdown explores the expansion of particular pastoral estates on the volcanic plains of the Western District from 1847. The tour is organised by AGHS's Victorian Branch and will be led by conservation landscape architect and long-time AGHS member Pamela Jellie. *Booked out at time of printing.*

POST-CONFERENCE TOUR

Tuesday 31 October – Monday 13 November 2017

14-day / 13 night post-conference New Zealand South Island tour. Lynne Walker invites you to join her on a personal tour of her home island exploring a wide range of extraordinary gardens from coastal to high country, castle to courtyard and enjoying great cuisine and wines along the way. Tour begins in Christchurch and is limited to 45 people.

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

The Australian Garden History Society promotes awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes through engagement, research, advocacy and activities.

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